**Montessori education, tried, tested and working**

Dr. Maria Montessori opened her first ‘Casa de Bambini’ (House of Children) in 1907, in Rome. Today 110 years later, the Montessori education has touched every corner of the world and helped millions of children successfully, on their journey into adulthood. Her philosophy in education is accepted universally, where children become responsible citizens of the world.

The Windsor Montessori School in the Home Park, Windsor was started in 1980. by Menik Ellawala. This was the first Montessori school in Berkshire and still flourishes under her leadership. The school admits children from the age of 2 years to 9 years.

The Windsor Montessori House of Children in Old Windsor was started in 2015, with the support of the Crown Estate, to support working parents. This has an attached nursery upstairs and the classroom for children from 2.5 years to 5 years downstairs.

Both schools were started, to foster a love of learning and to educate children to be caring, socially responsible citizens of their community and the world. These are the human values Dr Montessori spoke, in her peace programme in educating children over a century ago. Today, these are the values known as British values embedded in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, endorsed by the Department of Education

The philosophy of the WMS and the WMHC, is based on the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, whose holistic vision of education focuses on the cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs of the child Our education is a preparation for life..

The UK’s education system is struggling to find ways to achieve even the basic levels of reading, writing and maths among our children. But the Montessori approach offers a tried and tested solution that is working in nursery schools and primary schools both here and across the globe. Why; because Montessori approach is driven by the developmental needs of the children, rather than the ever-changing educational policies of government.

There are many differences between Montessori education and the mainstream sector. They differ, from the type of materials found in the classroom to the role of the teacher, the freedom of movement and freedom of choice. The responsibility given to the children and respect for the individuality of the child. But perhaps the most fundamental difference is in the view of the purpose of education.

Education policy is still based on the premise that the main purpose of education is the transmission of a prescribed curriculum to a prescribed timetable. As a result the children are not given the time to think and get involved in what they are doing. They are constantly rushed from one activity to another. Therefore the children stop thinking or acting for themselves and wait to be told what to do. They are not allowed to find out for themselves or correct their own mistakes. The entire education system is adult driven and not child focused.

By contrast Montessori education seeks to nurture the natural development of the child and seek to provide the opportunity for the child to satisfy their inner needs, through exploration, independence and perseverance. Hence the child is naturally motivated to learn, given the time he needs to consolidate his knowledge.

Dr. Montessori believed that the learning should be child driven, as each child is born with innate powers to create and form himself. Our responsibility as adults is not to supplant these developmental powers, but to create a safe and a stimulating environment to satisfy them.

At the Windsor Montessori School and the Windsor Montessori House of Children we follow the tenets of Dr Montessori by offering a truly child-centred, multi-sensory environment. The curriculum and the teacher’s role are all carefully designed to honour self-paced growth, encouraging group awareness and social cooperation.

Menik Ellawala

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